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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet provides a summary of the educational benefits available to United States Armed Services enlisted and discharged personnel under the Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty Educational Assistance Program, Chapter 30 of Title 38 U.S. Code, Public Law 101 347. The pamphlet, in question and answer form, includes information describing how qualified persons can receive payments under the program and suggestions on where to go to for help and obtain more detailed information. Twenty-six specific questions cover such concerns as eligibility, how long educational assistance is available, how much assistance one can receive, types of training allowed and the restrictions that exist, counseling availability, criteria for continuing financial support, and what responsibilities the recipient has in regards to enrollment changes and payment discrepancies. (GLR)

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Department of Veterans Affairs

Summary of Educational Benefits

Under the Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty Educational Assistance Program Chapter 30 of Title 38 U.S. Code

ED 366 255

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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VA Pamphlet
22-90-2, Revised
May 1993

Veterans Benefits Administration
Washington DC 20420

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This pamphlet is designed to provide information to veterans, persons on active duty, and other interested parties concerning title 38 benefit programs in accordance with section 421 of Public Law 101-237.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty Educational Assistance Program. The program provides education and training opportunities to eligible persons.

This pamphlet provides a general description of the education benefits. It includes information to help you understand how you receive payments under the program. It offers suggestions on where to go for help and to get more detailed information.

The information may be of help to you in making a decision to enter training. You should read it carefully to understand fully the range of benefits available.

This pamphlet is a summary of the benefits available under this program. Do not rely on it to determine if you are eligible for education benefits. To receive a formal decision from VA, you must file a claim for benefits.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

You may be eligible for education benefits as a veteran or serviceperson if your active duty is under one of the following categories.

Category 1 – You entered active duty for the first time after June 30, 1985, and served continuously for 3 years.

However, only 2 years of active duty are required if:

- You are now on active duty;
- You first enlisted for 2 years active duty; or
- You have an obligation to serve 4 years in the Selected Reserve (the 2 by 4 program). You must enter the Selected Reserve within 1 year of your release from active duty.

In Category 1, you must have your military pay reduced by $100 a month for the first 12 months of active duty. If you elect not to participate in this program, you may not change this decision at a later date *unless* you qualify under Category 3 below.

You may also be eligible if:

- You were on active duty between December 1, 1988, and June 30, 1989;
- You withdrew your election not to participate;
- You had your military pay reduced by $100 a month for 12 months; and
- You completed the period of active duty you were obligated to serve on December 1, 1988. If you did not complete the period,

your discharge must be for one of the reasons in the next paragraph regarding Discharges and Separations.

You must obtain a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate before your first period of active duty ends. Completing 12 credit hours toward a college degree meets the requirement.

If you were on active duty on August 2, 1990, and were discharged without obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalency, you have until October 28, 1994 to do so. Under this extension, you may *not* use 12 hours toward a college degree to meet the requirement.

Category 2 – You had remaining entitlement under the Vietnam Era GI Bill on December 31, 1989, and you served on active duty for any number of days during the period October 19, 1984 to June 30, 1985, and you continued on active duty through:

- June 30, 1988; or
- June 30, 1987, and you served 4 years in the Selected Reserve after release from active duty. You must have entered the Selected Reserve within 1 year of your release from active duty.

You must have obtained a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate before December 31, 1989. Completing 12 credit hours toward college degree meets the requirement.

Category 3 – You were on active duty on September 30, 1990, and elected to participate in chapter 30 before being involuntarily separated after February 2, 1991.

You may also be eligible under Category 3 if you were voluntarily separated under the VSI (Voluntary Separation Incentive) or SSB (Special Separation Benefit) program and you elected to participate in chapter 30.

If you were eligible for the Post Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (chapter 32 – VEAP), you must elect to receive benefits under chapter 30 and apply for a refund of your contributions to VEAP.

If you were on active duty on September 30, 1990, and were involuntarily separated after February 2, 1991, or if you were voluntarily separated under the VSI or SSB program on or after October 23, 1992, you must have elected to participate in chapter 30 and you must have had your military pay reduced by $1,200 *before* your separation.

If you were voluntarily separated under the VSI or SSB program during the period December 15, 1991 through October 22, 1992, VA must receive your election to participate in chapter 30 before October 23, 1993. Also, you must furnish $1,200 to VA.

You must obtain a high school diploma or its equivalency before you apply for benefits. Completing 12 hours toward a college degree meets the requirement.

DISCHARGES AND SEPARATIONS

Your discharge must be "honorable." Discharges "under honorable conditions" and "general" discharges do *not* establish eligibility for education benefits.

A discharge or release for one of the following reasons could result in a reduction of the required length of active duty:

- Convenience of the government;
- Disability;
- Hardship;
- A medical condition existing before service;
- A medical condition that is not a disability or due to your misconduct but that interfered with your performance of duty; or
- Certain reductions in force (RIF).

OTHER ISSUES

Generally, you are not eligible if you graduated from a service academy and received a commission after December 31, 1976.

Generally, you are not eligible under Categories 1 or 2 if you received a commission after completing a Reserve Officers' Training Corps scholarship program after December 31, 1976. This scholarship pays a stipend *and* all educational expenses, i.e., tuition, fees, books, and supplies. If you completed Reserve Officers' Training Corps *without a full scholarship,* you are eligible to participate in chapter 30.

The following types of active duty do *not* establish eligibility:

- Time assigned by the military to a civilian institution to take the same course provided to civilians;
- Time served as a cadet or midshipman at a service academy; or
- Time spent on active duty for training in the National Guard or Reserve.

NOTE: Time assigned by the military to a civilian institution and time served at a military or service academy does not break the *continuity* of active duty required to establish eligibility. Also, active duty for training does count toward the 4 years in the Selected Reserve under the 2 by 4 program.

HOW MANY MONTHS OF BENEFITS CAN YOU GET?

You may be entitled to receive up to 36 months of education benefits.

However, if you did not complete your enlistment period, you earn only one month of entitlement for each month of active duty after June 30, 1985.

You may also earn one month of entitlement for each 4 months in the Selected Reserve after June 30, 1985.

You may receive a maximum of 48 months of benefits under more than one VA education program. For example, If you used 30 months of dependents' education benefits (chapter 35) and are eligible for chapter 30, you could have a maximum of 18 months of potential entitlement remaining. If you used 27 months under the Vietnam Era GI Bill (chapter 34) before December 31, 1989, and are eligible for chapter 30, you could have a maximum of 21 months of potential entitlement remaining.

HOW IS ENTITLEMENT CHARGED?

You are charged one full day of entitlement for each day of full-time benefits paid.

For correspondence and flight training, you use 1 month of entitlement each time VA pays the equivalent of one month of full-time benefits. If your full-time rate is $400, and you receive $1,200 for a correspondence course beginning after April 1, 1993, the entitlement charge is 3 months. If your full-time rate is $325, and you receive $3,900 for flight training beginning after April 1, 1993, the entitlement charge is 12 months.

If you pursue a cooperative program, you use 80% of a month for each month of benefits paid.

For apprenticeship and job training programs, the entitlement charge changes every 6 months. During the first 6 months, the charge is 75% of full-time. For the second 6 months, the charge is 55% of full-time. For the rest of the program, the charge is 35% of full-time.

VA can extend entitlement to the end of a term, quarter, or semester, if the ending date of your entitlement falls within a term, quarter, or semester. If the school does not operate on a term basis, entitlement can be extended for 12 weeks.

HOW MUCH EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE WILL YOU GET?

BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

If you first entered active duty after June 30, 1985, and your first service obligation was more than 2 years, you will receive the following monthly rates:

Rates for Schooling

Monthly Rate (Before 4/1/93)	Monthly Rate (Effective 4/1/93)	Training Time
$350	$400	Full
$262.50	$300	Three-Quarter
$175	$200	One-Half

Rates for Apprenticeship and Job Training

Monthly Rate (Before 4/1/93)	Monthly Rate (Effective 4/1/93)	Period of Training
$262.50	$300	First 6 Months
$192.50	$220	Second 6 Months
$122.50	$140	Remainder of Program

You will also receive the above rates if:

- You first entered active duty after June 30, 1985, with a service obligation of 2 years plus 4 years in the Selected Reserve;
- You first entered active duty after June 30, 1985, with a service obligation of 2 years, and you extended your obligation to 3 years or more; or
- You are eligible under Category 3.

If you first entered active duty after June 30, 1985, and your first service obligation was 2 years, you will receive the following monthly rates:

Rates for Schooling

Monthly Rate (Before 4/1/93)	Monthly Rate (Effective 4/1/93)	Training Time
$275	$325	Full
$206.25	$243.75	Three-Quarter
$137.50	$162.50	One-Half

Rates for Apprenticeship and Job Training

Monthly Rate (Before 4/1/93)	Monthly Rate (Effective 4/1/93)	Period of Training
$206.25	$243.75	First 6 Months
$151.25	$178.75	Second 6 Months
$ 96.25	$113.75	Remainder of Program

RATES FOR OTHER TYPES OF TRAINING

If you take cooperative training, you receive 80% of the full-time rate.

If you take a correspondence course, you receive 55% of the approved charges for the course.

If you take flight training, you receive 60% of the approved charges for the course, including solo hours. VA does not pay for solo hours before October 1, 1992.

If you are on active duty, or training at less than 1/2 time, you receive the lesser of:

- The monthly rate based on the tuition and fees for your course(s); or
- The maximum monthly rate based on your training time.

INCREASES IN EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

If you are eligible under Category 2, VA pays an additional amount equal to 1/2 of the chapter 34 monthly rate.

VA pays the basic chapter 30 rate and 1/2 of the chapter 34 rate until you use up your chapter 34 entitlement. After using your chapter 34 entitlement, you receive the basic chapter 30 rate.

VA pays an additional amount, commonly known as a "kicker," if directed by DOD (Department of Defense).

If you are eligible under Category 3 and had a chapter 32 "kicker," VA pays the basic chapter 30 rate and an additional amount based upon the amount of the remaining kicker.

HOW LONG ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

Benefits end 10 years from the date of your last discharge or release from active duty.

VA can extend your 10-year period by the amount of time you were prevented from training during the period due to:

- A disability; or
- Being held by a foreign government or power.

VA can extend your 10-year period if you re-enter active duty for 90 days or more after becoming eligible. The extension ends 10 years from the date of discharge or release from the later period. Periods of active duty of less than 90 days can qualify for extensions only if your discharge or release was for one of the following reasons:

- A service-connected disability;
- A medical condition existing before active duty;
- Hardship; or
- A reduction in force (RIF).

If your discharge is upgraded by the military, the 10-year period begins on the date of the upgrade.

CATEGORY 2 ELIGIBILITY

If you are eligible under Category 2 and your discharge was before December 31, 1989, you have until January 1, 2000 to use your entitlement. In most instances VA will subtract periods you were not on active duty between January 1, 1977, and June 30, 1985, from your 10-year period.

ELIGIBILITY BASED ON THE 2 BY 4 PROGRAM

If you are eligible based upon 2 years of active duty and 4 years in the Selected Reserve, you have 10 years from your release from the active duty or 10 years from the completion of the 4-year Selected Reserve obligation to use your benefits; whichever is later.

WHAT TRAINING MAY YOU TAKE?

You may receive benefits for a wide variety of training.

You may seek an undergraduate or graduate degree at a college or university. You may take a cooperative training program. You may also take an accredited independent study program leading to a standard college degree.

You may take courses leading to a certificate or diploma from business, technical, or vocational schools.

You may work and train in an apprenticeship or job training program offered by a company or union.

You may take a correspondence course.

You may take flight training from September 30, 1990, to September 30, 1994. You must have a private pilot license and meet the physical requirements for a commercial license before beginning training.

If you would like to study abroad, education benefits are payable *only* for programs leading to a college degree.

A State agency or VA must approve each program offered by a school or company. If you want to know if you may receive benefits for a program, contact the nearest VA regional office.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR REMEDIAL, DEFICIENCY, AND REFRESHER TRAINING?

You may be eligible for benefits for remedial, deficiency, and refresher courses. Remedial and deficiency courses are special ones intended to assist students in overcoming a deficiency in a particular area of study.

Remedial and deficiency courses must be necessary for pursuit of a program of education. Refresher training is for technological advances that occurred in a field of employment. The advance must have occurred while you were on active duty or after your release. There is an entitlement charge for these courses.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR TUTORIAL ASSISTANCE?

You may receive a special allowance for individual tutoring if you enter school at 1/2 time or more. To qualify, you must have a deficiency in a subject, making the tutoring necessary. The school must certify the tutor's qualification and the hours of tutoring. If eligible, you may receive a maximum monthly payment of $100. The maximum total benefit is $1,200. There is no entitlement charge for the first $600 of tutorial assistance. To compute the charge for payments beyond $600, divide the amount paid by your full-time rate for schooling. To apply, complete VA Form 22-1990t, Application and Enrollment Certification for Individualized Tutorial Assistance. Give it to the certifying official in the office handling VA paperwork at your school to complete.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR WORK-STUDY?

You may be eligible for an additional allowance under a work-study program. The work-study program allows you to perform work for VA in return for an hourly wage. You may perform outreach services under the supervision of a VA employee, prepare and process VA paperwork, work at a VA medical facility, or other approved activities. You must train at the 3/4 or full-time rate. The maximum number of hours you may work is 25 times the number of weeks in your enrollment period. Payments will be at the Federal minimum wage or your State minimum wage, whichever is greater. To apply, complete VA Form 20-8691, Application for Work-Study Allowance. Send it to the nearest VA regional office.

If you have an overpayment, you may be able to participate in work-study in order to reduce or eliminate your overpayment.

ARE THERE RESTRICTIONS ON TRAINING?

There are some restrictions on training. Benefits are *not* payable for the following courses:

- Bartending and personality development courses.
- Any course given by radio.
- Any courses taken solely by open-circuit television.
- Self-improvement courses such as reading, speaking, woodworking, basic seamanship, and English as a second language.

- Any course which is avocational or recreational in character.
- Farm-cooperative courses.
- Audited courses.
- Courses not leading to an educational, professional or vocational objective.
- Courses you have taken before and successfully completed.
- Courses taken by a Federal government employee under the Government Employees' Training Act.
- Courses paid in whole or in part by the Armed Forces while on active duty.
- Courses taken while in receipt of benefits for the same program from the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs.

VA must reduce benefits if you are in a Federal, State or local prison after being convicted of a felony.

You may not receive benefits for a program at a proprietary school if you are an owner or official of the school.

If you seek a college degree, the school must admit you to a degree program by the start of your third term.

CAN YOU BE ELIGIBLE FOR MORE THAN ONE BENEFIT?

Yes, you can have eligibility under more than one education benefit program. If you are, you must elect which benefit to receive for each program you take. The benefits programs are:

- Chapters 31, 32, and 35 of Title 38, U.S. Code;
- Chapters 106 and 107 of Title 10, U.S. Code;
- Section 903 of the Department of Defense Authorization Act of 1981;
- The Hostage Relief Act of 1980; and
- The Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986.

IMPORTANT: If you are eligible for more than one benefit, we strongly suggest that you discuss your education plans with a VA counselor. The counselor can help you explore the options open to you and plan your program to use your benefits fully.

IS COUNSELING AVAILABLE?

Counseling is available if you are:

- Eligible for VA educational assistance; or
- On active duty and within 180 days of discharge; or
- A veteran with a discharge that is not dishonorable and who is within one year from date of discharge.

If you meet one of these qualifications and you request counseling, VA will provide services to help you understand your educational and vocational strengths and weaknesses and to plan:

- An educational or training goal and the means by which you can reach that goal; or
- An employment goal for which you qualify on the basis of your present training and experience. VA can also help you to plan an effective job search.

Contact the nearest VA regional office for more information or to schedule a counseling appointment.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION?

You may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation under chapter 31 of title 38, U.S. Code if:

- You have a service-connected disability or disabilities rated by VA at 20% or more, and VA finds you have an employment handicap; or
- Effective October 1, 1993, you have a service-connected disability or disabilities rated by VA at 10%, and VA finds that you have a serious employment handicap.

Vocational rehabilitation helps disabled veterans become independent in daily living, and to the extent possible, to select, prepare for, and secure employment that is compatible with their interests, talents, skills, physical capabilities, and goals.

If you are eligible for both chapter 30 and vocational rehabilitation, you should discuss your benefits with a VA counselor. Remember, you must elect one benefit, since you cannot receive benefits under two programs at the same time.

To apply for vocational rehabilitation, complete VA Form 28-1900, Disabled Veterans Application for Vocational Rehabilitation. Send it to the nearest VA regional office.

CAN YOU CHANGE PROGRAMS?

If you change the educational, professional, or vocational objective for which you entered training, VA considers this a change of program. However, VA does not consider any of the following to be a change of program:

- A change in the type of courses needed to attain a vocational objective;
- A change in your objective following the completion of the immediately preceding program of education; or
- A return to your previous educational professional, or vocational objective following a change in program.

The law permits one change of program without prior VA approval if your attendance, conduct, and progress in the last program were satisfactory. VA may approve additional changes if the proposed programs are suitable to your abilities, aptitudes, and interests.

MUST YOU MAINTAIN SATISFACTORY ATTENDANCE, CONDUCT, AND PROGRESS?

Once you start receiving benefits, you must maintain satisfactory attendance, conduct, and progress. If you do not meet the standards set by your school, the certifying official must notify VA. VA will stop your benefits if the school reports unsatisfactory attendance, conduct, or progress.

VA may resume benefits if:

- You reenter the same program at the same school; and
- Your school approves your reentry and certifies it to VA.

If you do not re-enter the same program at the same school, VA may resume benefits if:

- The cause of your unsatisfactory attendance, conduct, or progress has been removed; and

- The program you intend to pursue is suitable to your abilities, aptitudes, and interests.

WHAT MUST YOU DO TO QUALIFY?

Once you find a school with a program you want or a company or union offering an apprenticeship or job training in your field, there are two important steps.

- FIRST, make sure the program you choose is approved for VA training. If you are not clear on this point, VA will inform you or the school about the requirements;
- SECOND, complete VA Form 22-1990, Application for Education Benefits. Send it to the VA regional office with jurisdiction over the State where you will train. If you are not on active duty, send copy 4 of your DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge From Active Duty. If you are on active duty, you must have your enrollment approved by your base Education Services Officer, and you must have your service verified by your Commanding Officer.

VA will review your application and inform you if anything else is needed.

If you have started training, take your application form to your school, or to your employer or union if you are in a job training program. Ask the certifying official to complete VA form 22-1999, Enrollment Certification, and send both forms to VA.

One of the following VA regional offices has jurisdiction over your claim. Check the map to see which office has jurisdiction over the State where you will train.

Eastern Region:

VA Regional Office PO Box 4616 Buffalo, NY 14240-4616	Connecticut	New Hampshire	Pennsylvania
	Delaware	New Jersey	Rhode Island
	Maine	New York	Vermont
	Massachusetts	Ohio	West Virginia

Southern Region:

VA Regional Office PO Box 54346 Atlanta, GA 30308-0346	Alabama	Georgia	Puerto Rico
	Arkansas	Louisiana	South Carolina
	District of Columbia	Maryland	Tennessee
	Florida	Mississippi	Virginia
		North Carolina	Foreign Schools

Central Region:

VA Regional Office
PO Box 66830
St. Louis, MO
63166-6830

Colorado
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Kentucky
Michigan
Minnesota
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
North Dakota
South Dakota
Wisconsin
Wyoming

Western Region:

VA Regional Office
PO Box 8888
Muskogee, OK
74402-8888

Alaska
Arizona
California
Hawaii
Idaho
New Mexico
Nevada
Oklahoma
Oregon
Philippines
Texas
Utah
Washington

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU DISAGREE WITH A VA DECISION?

You may appeal VA decisions on education benefits. You must file an appeal within one year of the date you receive notice of a decision. Each notice of decision issued by VA contains your legal rights and appeal procedures. You may request a personal hearing on your claim.

If you need assistance in filing an appeal, contact the nearest VA regional office or a veterans service organization.

HOW DO YOU RECEIVE MONTHLY PAYMENTS?

After choosing a school and submitting your application to VA, ask the certifying official to complete an enrollment certification form. The school official will send the enrollment certification to the appropriate VA regional office. VA will process the form and determine your eligibility to benefits.

Persons in school receive a verification form each month to complete and return to the appropriate VA regional office. Upon processing, VA will release a check.

If you are in an apprenticeship or job training program, you will receive a form to report the hours worked each month. Sign the form and give it to the certifying official for the company or union. The certifying official must complete the form and send it to the appropriate VA regional office. Upon processing, VA will release a check.

If you are taking a correspondence course, you will receive a form to certify the lessons you completed each quarter, i.e., March, June, September, and December. Enter the number of lessons completed during the quarter. Send the form to the school to enter the number of lessons serviced during the quarter. The school will send the form to the appropriate VA regional office. Upon processing, VA will release a check. Payments are based upon the number of lessons serviced by the school.

VA sends flight schools a supply of blank monthly certification of flight training forms. The school completes the form by entering the number of hours, hourly rate, and the total charge for flight training received during the month. Review and sign the completed form and send it to the appropriate VA regional office. Upon processing, VA will release a check.

The law prohibits schools from cashing VA checks under a power of attorney agreement.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU DON'T RECEIVE A CHECK OR VERIFICATION FORM?

If you attend school, you should receive your verification form by the 5th of the month. If you do not, immediately contact the nearest VA of-

fice. Explain that you are receiving education benefits under chapter 30 and you have not received your monthly verification form. The person answering the telephone will take the information and forward it to the appropriate VA office for processing.

If you have submitted the form but have not received a check after 2 weeks, immediately contact the nearest VA regional office. Explain that you are receiving education benefits under chapter 30 and have submitted your verification form. The person answering the telephone will record the necessary information, determine the status of the check, and contact you by letter or telephone with the information.

Whenever you contact VA, have your VA file number readily available.

MAY YOU GO PART-TIME?

If you are unable to attend full time, consider going part-time. Benefit rates for part-time training are less than the full-time rate. Likewise, the entitlement charge for part-time training is less than the charge for full-time training. For example, if you receive benefits for 12 months at full time, the charge is 12 months. If you receive 1/2 time benefits for 12 months, the charge is 6 months.

CAN YOU GET AN ADVANCE PAYMENT?

You may receive an advance payment for the initial month or partial month and the following month, if:

- You train at 1/2 time or more;
- The school agrees to handle advance payments;
- You request an advance payment in writing; and
- VA receives your enrollment certification at least 30 days before classes start.

VA will mail an advance payment check, made out to you, to the school for delivery to you at registration, but not more than 30 days before classes start. Before you request an advance payment, ask the certifying official if your school has agreed to process advance payments. Your request for an advance payment must be on VA Form 22-1999, Enrollment Certification, or a sheet of paper attached to the enrollment certification.

If you receive an advance payment at registration, be sure that the school certifies to VA that you received the check. If you reduce your enrollment or withdraw from all courses during the period covered by an advance payment, you could have an overpayment that VA is required to collect from you. If you think the amount of a VA check is incorrect, contact VA *before* cashing the check.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

CHANGES IN YOUR ENROLLMENT

If you change your enrollment, immediately tell the certifying official of your school. Request the certifying official to notify the appropriate VA regional office of the change. You should also notify the appropriate VA regional office of the change yourself. If VA does not receive prompt notice of a change, you could be liable for an overpayment of benefits.

NOTE: Employees who process VA forms at schools are *not* VA employees.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Promptly notify the appropriate VA regional office of any change in your address. Send your complete new address, including the ZIP Code.

CHANGES IN SELECTED RESERVE STATUS

If you receive increased benefits or additional months of entitlement due to Selected Reserve service, notify the appropriate VA regional office if you change reserve status. If you do not satisfactorily complete your 4-year Selected Reserve obligation, you may not receive increased benefits.

Examples of changes you must report are:

- Leaving the Selected Reserve; or
- A discharge or release from the Selected Reserve.

You do not need to report changes of units or components.

CHANGES IN DEPENDENCY

If you receive chapter 30 benefits and 1/2 of the chapter 34 rate (based on Category 2 eligibility), your allowance may include an additional

amount for dependents. Dependents include your spouse, natural children, adopted children, stepchildren, and dependent parents. You must report any change affecting your dependents.

Examples of changes you must report are:

- Marriage;
- Divorce or separation from a spouse;
- Birth of a child;
- Termination of custody of an adopted child or stepchild;
- Marriage of a child;
- Enrollment in or withdrawal from school of a child between ages 18 and 23; and
- Death of a dependent.

VA requires documentary proof to establish dependents. The preferred evidence is a certified copy of the public or church record of a marriage or birth. A certified copy means one obtained from the official custodian of the record. The copy should include the custodian's certification as to its authenticity. Other individuals who can certify documents to VA include:

- Accredited representatives of a veteran service organization;
- Military personnel appointed to this task by orders of the commanding officer of a military facility; and
- The certifying official at your school.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU CHANGE YOUR ENROLLMENT?

If you withdraw from one or more of your courses after the end of the school's drop period and receive non-punitive grade(s), you may have to repay *all* benefits for the course(s). VA will reduce or stop your benefits on the date of reduction or withdrawal.

You may not have to repay the benefits if you show that the change was due to mitigating circumstances. VA defines "mitigating circumstances" as unavoidable and unexpected events that directly interfere with your pursuit of a course and are beyond your control.

Examples of reasons VA may accept are:

- Extended illness;
- Severe illness or death in your immediate family;
- Unscheduled changes in your employment; and
- Lack of child care.

Examples of reasons VA may not accept are:

- Withdrawal to avoid a failing grade;

- Dislike of the instructor; and
- Too many courses attempted.

NOTE: VA may ask you to furnish evidence to support your reason for a change. If a serious injury or illness caused the change, obtain a statement from your doctor. If a change in employment caused the change, obtain a statement from your employer.

The first time you withdraw from up to six credits hours, VA will "excuse" the withdrawal and pay benefits for the period attended.

Remember: This only applies to your first withdrawal.

If you receive a grade(s) that does not count toward graduation, you may have to repay *all* benefits for the courses. You should check your school's grading policy with the registrar or the office handling VA paperwork. The school may have "non-punitive grades." VA defines "non-punitive grades" as those not used to compute graduation requirements. Common examples are:

- An "I" grade for an incomplete which is not made up during the time period required by the school or within 1 year from receipt;
- A "W" grade for withdrawing;
- An "AU" grade for auditing; or
- Any grade the school does not use to compute the GPA (grade point average) or its equivalent.

If you receive a non-punitive grade, the school will notify VA. Upon receipt of the notice, VA may reduce or stop benefits. You may not have to repay the benefits if you show that the grades were due to mitigating circumstances.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT OVERPAYMENTS?

An overpayment is an incorrect benefit payment that is more than the amount to which you are entitled. Promptly notifying VA of changes affecting your benefits can prevent overpayments.

In addition, use reasonable judgment when you accept and cash a check. Carefully read all letters from VA on monthly rates and effective dates of your benefits. If you think a VA check is wrong, contact VA *before* cashing the check. Return any checks for the wrong amount to VA.

If you cash a check for the wrong amount, *you will be liable for repayment of the resulting overpayment.*

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU HAVE AN OVERPAYMENT?

VA is required to take prompt and aggressive action to recover overpayments. You have the right to request a waiver of the overpayment or

verification that the amount is correct. If an overpayment is not repaid or waived, VA may add interest and collection fees to your debt and take the following actions to collect the debt:

- Withhold future benefits to apply to your debt;
- Refer your debt to a private collection agency;.
- Recover the debt from your federal income tax refund;
- Recover the debt from your salary if you are a federal employee;
- File a lawsuit in federal court to collect the debt; or
- Withhold approval of a VA home loan guarantee.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

For forms and information, the following offices or representatives can assist you:

- Any VA regional office;
- Any VA office or Vet Center;
- Local representatives of veterans organizations;
- Education Services Officers at military posts or installations for persons on active duty; or
- American embassies or consulates, if you reside in a foreign country (except the Republic of the Philippines).

Consult a telephone directory under United States Government, Department of Veterans Affairs or Veterans Administration, for the telephone number of the office nearest you. Toll-free telephone service is available in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the U. S. Virgin Islands. Call 1-800-827-1000.

To assure that accurate information and courteous responses are given to the public, VA supervisory personnel occasionally monitor telephone calls. No record is kept of the caller's name, address, file number, or telephone number.

To obtain information on other sources of assistance, contact the financial aid office at your school.

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Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington DC 20420

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for Private use $300

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VA Pamphlet 22-90-2
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